AMO REPORTS 85-3

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN ONTARIO: FUNDING INADEQUACIES

THE ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ONTARIO
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ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ONTARIO

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, a non-partisan voluntary organization, is united to promote the values of the municipal government system and the status of the municipal level of government as a vital and essential component of the total intergovernmental framework of Ontario and Canada.

The Association acts as the collective voice of Ontario's municipal governments and is organized to accomplish through cooperation and coordination, what the majority have neither the time nor the resources to do individually.

The Association represents some six hundred (600) municipal governments throughout Ontario. The governing body is composed of some eighty (80) municipal elected and appointed officials, who in turn represent a wide-range of municipal government interest.

The following sections and affiliated municipal professional associations form an important part of the Association's structure and therefore, play an important part in its activities in terms of the Board of Directors, program and policy development:

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* County and Regional Section
* Large Urban Section
* Northern Ontario Section (FONOM/NOMA)
* Rural (ROMA) Section
* Organization of Small Urban Municipalities Section

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MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN ONTARIO: FUNDING INADEQUACIES

INTRODUCTION

The Large Urban Section of AMO is pleased to host this one-day symposium on the provision and rehabilitation of municipal infrastructure with representatives from the federal and provincial governments participating in the discussion. The discussions to take place will bring recognition to municipal infrastructure as an underlying framework or the "backbone" of urban Canada.

Municipal infrastructure includes both "hard" and "soft" municipal services. Municipal infrastructure includes public works facilities such as roads, sidewalks, bridges, sewers, water supply and distribution networks and waste collection and disposal facilities. Infrastructure must also include facilities such as parks, libraries, schools and transit systems, which Canadians now regard as essential public services. The importance of municipal infrastructure as a public issue often goes unnoticed because more visible issues, such as unemployment, inflation, interest rates etc., command the attentions of decision-makers, the media and the public alike. Nevertheless, these facilities and systems continue to play a vital role in the functioning of our communities.

Sewer and water works, roads and bridges are among the essential components that allow Canadians to live and work in cities and towns. History reveals that without adequate sewer and water systems, sanitation and disease control becomes impossible to attain.

In small urban communities, it is possible to work and live in virtually the same location. This is not possible in many of our urban centres today. In these centres, the obvious need for adequate road systems is most evident. From the trip to work each day, to shopping for groceries each week, road systems are integral components to the ways Canadians must function.

Municipal infrastructure can be built to last, with structures continuing to be useful and productive for more than one hundred years. Unfortunately, however, there seems to be a natural tendency to neglect the maintenance and rehabilitation of such facilities once they are established. It is only when we are faced with the prospect of rebuilding those structures that municipal infrastructure becomes a focus of concern and attention.

Decision-makers must recognize that the efficiency of a community depends on the condition of its infrastructure. The health and welfare of our citizens and of the national economy requires well-functioning infrastructure. It has often been said that the whole is no greater than the sum of its parts. Therefore, the vitality of Canada and the strength of the Canadian economy depends to a large extent on the soundness of municipal infrastructure.

THE PROBLEM

Following the Second World War, rapid urbanization in Canada created the need for rapid construction and expansion of municipal infrastructure. Until the 1970's, this infrastructure seems to have been adequately maintained, partly because of good economic conditions, partly because many facilities were quite new. With the 1970's came change. Conditions today reflect changing circumstances and have helped to create a number of problems for municipal infrastructure:

- pressures on budgets during recession and restraint
- some post-war infrastructure now nearing the end of its lifespan
- rapid inflation of the 1970's unmatched by corresponding taxation increases
- increased competition/demands for municipal services
- reluctance to borrow at high interest rates
- increased public involvement in the decision-making process
- reduction in federal and provincial funding

In recognition of these problems, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) established a Task Force on Municipal Infrastructure in June 1983 to assess the problem and develop strategies to deal with it. The following material is based largely on the information gathered in 1984 by the FCM Task Force, information particularly relevant to large cities with populations of over 100,000, as well as information from studies prepared by the Ontario Good Roads Association and The Road Information Program of Canada (TRIP Canada).

THE FCM TASK FORCE "MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN CANADA: PHYSICAL CONDITION AND FUNDING ADEQUACY" 1985

Perhaps the four most critical aspects of infrastructure funding which were examined by the FCM Task Force dealt with (1) trends in public works allocations in relation to total municipal budgets; (2) the priority accorded to various types of infrastructure; (3) sources of revenue for financing infrastructure, and finally; (4) the costs of upgrading infrastructure in communities of differing sizes. The relatively few responses from small communities across Canada obliged the Task Force to draw its conclusions from the data collected from cities of over 10,000 population, where 75 percent of Canadians live. Actual returns represented half the population living in such communites.

In general terms, the Task Force concluded that essential hard service facilities, such as roads, bridges, sidewalks and sewers, are in poorer condition than community and social service facilities like parks, libraries and community centres, and are deteriorating faster. The average age of Canadian roads, bridges and storm sewers is approximately twenty years; of water mains and sanitary sewers, thirty years; of water treatment plants, twenty-three years; of sewage treatment plants, thirteen years.

Municipal Financing/Sources of Revenue

The major responsibility for the financing of municipal infrastructure rests with local governments. The data gathered resulted in the following general conclusions concerning sources of revenue for public works facilities: (1) that user fees provide most of the funds for water and sewage systems (about 80 percent); (2) that general tax revenues are the largest source of funds for roads (about 70 percent); and bridges (about 55 percent). Provincial revenues contribute approximately twenty percent of the funds needed to finance roads and bridges across Canada. The survey results indicate that federal funding is almost non-existent except for about five percent which is allocated to fund bridges. It is important, therefore, to briefly outline some of the revenue sources available to municipalities to finance municipal infrastructure.

User fees represent an alternative to increases in general tax revenues which are always politically unpopular. While normally accounting for a portion of the revenue required for most services, for water distribution systems and water and sewage treatment respectively,

they provide 85 percent, 82 percent and 65 percent of the funds needed for operation, replacement and rehabilitation. User fees also constitute the largest source of funds for sewage systems (47 percent). Connection charges or development cost charges can help offset the additional stress placed on existing infrastructure by new construction. Local improvement procedures can provide a mechanism for cost sharing for those who benefit directly from a project.

Another important source of revenue is debt financing or pay-as-you-go. According to the survey results, debt financing can account from between three percent and eighteen percent of revenues with bridges (18 percent), sewage collection (10 percent) and water treatment (11 percent) having the greatest proportion of debt financing. The Task Force noted a growing tendency amongst Canada's municipalities towards short-term planning and pay-as-you-go financing. The data collected indicated that debt had maintained a fairly constant proportion of a steadily declining total budget for public works. As a result, municipal infrastructure capital financing is placed in direct competition for funds with other services such as police, fire and various social services. The increased demand on general tax revenues has forced municipalities to cancel or postpone long term capital replacement projects in order to finance day-to-day operating needs.

The likely alternative, an increase in taxes, is not likely to prove to be politically acceptable.

Additional concerns such as the desire to institute proper long-term planning and scheduling; effective use of personnel and staff resources; absorption of major cost fluctuations over time; and the issue of equity must be considered in assessing the pros and cons of pay-as-you-go financing.

Federal Funding

Perhaps the most significant source of revenue which has become almost negligible over recent years is federal funding. Post-war federal programs and contributions added considerably to the establishment of a municipal infrastructure system in Canada. Over the past 15 years, however, federal funding has declined steadily, and the burden of financing major public works has fallen increasingly on local governments. As of March 1984, the Canadian government has ceased all direct assistance for municipal infrastructure.

On November 12, 1980, the federal government announced that its participation in the Joint Federal/Provincial Community Services Con-

tribution Program (CSCP), implemented in 1979 to replace the Neighbourhood Improvement Program, would be terminated on December 30, 1980. In its first year, the federal government allocated $51.6 million to Ontario through CSCP. This figure rose to $85.95 million in 1980. Provincial contributions through CSCP represented $90 million and $153 million over the same period. Eligible municipal projects, as defined by CSCP, included upgrading existing neighbourhoods through improving municipal services and public utilities and by providing social and recreational facilities.

The bulk of the federal CSCP allocation to Ontario was utilized by the Ministry of the Environment for municipal infrastructure projects - water and waste treatment facilities and storm sewers. It has been estimated that approximately $175 million in construction of water and waste treatment facilities would be lost annually as a result of the termination of the program. AMO, in the Report of the Association Joint Committee on Sewer and Water Services (March 1985) has recommended:

> "that the provincial government continue to seek additional federal funding for municipal infrastructure improvements, and that it request the new federal government to restore the Community Services Contribution Program or establish a similar program which provided badly needed funding to small urban and rural municipalities".

Employment lost in direct on-site construction amounts to an estimated 3,000 person years annually in Ontario as a result of the termination. Service industries, like equipment manufacturing and building suppliers, are estimated to lose at least 6,000 person years annually in Ontario, as a result of the federal action.

Housing, environmental and community concerns must be taken into account. AMO Report 84-10 "Social Housing Overview: Current Programs and Principles" (December 1984) states that the continuation of "support for municipal infrastructure is essential to the creation and maintenance of affordable accommodation" (page 5).

Community renewal efforts, for example, have been decreasing in importance at both the federal and provincial levels. Federal expenditures in the area of community renewal have decreased from $218.7 million in 1978 to $66.1 million in 1983. Over this same period, provincial expenditures have also declined from $39.2 million to $7.9 million.

Required Funding

It is clear that substantial funding, far exceeding the amount available to most municipalities, is required for infrastructure maintenance and replacement. Assistance should come from both the federal and provincial governments, especially for items which contribute regional or provincial benefits. The FCM Task Force favours a method similar to cost-sharing formulas employed in the past to finance infrastructure improvements.

In the past, most federal programs were directed towards the new construction of facilities rather than reconstructing and repairing existing infrastructure. Maintenance and reconstruction were perceived to be normal municipal functions which contributed insignificantly to the creation of additional jobs. Given the nature of the replacement work required and the number of layoffs of municipal employees in the recent past, the situation appears to have changed dramatically.

The cost of upgrading facilities to acceptable levels in municipalities with populations greater than 10,000 is estimated in the FCM study. Using data compiled from 71 municipalities which responded to the survey, the estimated cost to upgrade the six surveyed facilities (sewage collection, sewage treatment, water distribution, water treatment, roads and bridges) to an acceptable level is $791 per capita. With capital works and operating expenditures at $101 and $147 per capita, respectively, for 1983, the total shortfall amounts to $543 per capita. The figures for municipalities over 100,000 perhaps gives a more valid indication of the actual costs of bringing these facilities up to an acceptable standard, since the data was derived from a more representative sample (20 of the 33 cities of 100,000 or greater population responded).

Costs of Upgrading - Large Urban Municipalities

For municipalities of 100,000 or more population, the estimated total cost of bringing the six facilities surveyed up to acceptable standards is approximately $6.3 billion or $680 per capita. About half of this amount is required for roads and bridges and 18 percent for sewage collection systems. It should be noted that 69 percent of road expenses, 55 percent of bridge expenses and 37 percent of sewage collection expenses are funded from general tax revenues. In 1983, municipal budgets for these cities indicated that total expenditures of $8.9 billion, and public works budget of $2.3 billion or 26 percent of the total. Spread evenly over the next ten years, approximately $630

million per annum would have to be spent in addition to current public works expenditures to bring infrastructure up to, or to maintain acceptable levels. Necessary increases would add about 6.75 percent to total municipal budgets.

The Task Force concluded that the funding required is beyond the ability of most local governments to assume. As a result, additional funding is necessary from the provincial and federal governments. If cost-sharing similar to previous capital programs (CSCP etc.) could be attained, (50 percent federal, 25 percent provincial, 25 percent municipal), the municipal funding requirements would represent an increase of about two percent of total municipal budgets.

Other recommendations in the FCM study focus on the need to develop additional local government funding sources to help solve the revenue problem, including new methods of financing capital works. Budget priorities should be re-examined so that basic services are emphasized during periods of restraint.

ONTARIO ROADS STUDIES

Ontario Good Roads Association: Brief to Resources Development Committee of Cabinet, November 1984

In its brief to the Cabinet Committee on Resources Development, November 1, 1984, the Ontario Good Roads Association expressed concern that Ontario's most significant physical asset, its road system, faced the likelihood of serious deterioration in quality in the face of Ministry of Transportation and Communications subsidy constraints. The brief acknowledged that the provincial government faces demands for all the services it provides, demands well beyond its fiscal capacity. Under such conditions one must recognize the problem of assigning priorities in the allocation of scarce resouces ($) amongst the many legitimate requests which come before decision-makers at Queen s Park. Not surprisingly, the Ontario Good Roads Association states that "the reduction in real dollars of road system funding is the most counter-productive policy that the government could adopt when one considers the serious consequences of such a policy"(page 2 of brief). Concerns raised in the brief can be summarized as follows:

1) In 1983, 73 percent of all municipalities in Ontario (610 of 838) were compelled to finance part of their annual road budget without provincial cost-sharing, even though the work done

was eligible for subsidy under current government policy; municipal applications to the Ministry of Transportation and Communications for supplementary allocations of provincial funds, usually reserved for emergency situations, continue to increase each year while the money set aside by the province for this purpose declines; the majority of all resolutions directed to the Ontario Good Roads Association from municipalities deal with provincial funding directly or indirectly.

2) Statistics indicate that approximately 28 percent of all municipal roads and streets are now inadequate by the standards set by the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. This figure will increase dramatically over the next five years unless funding is increased drastically in real terms.

3) Provincial subsidy allocations to municipal roads have decreased by at least 18.2 percent in 1983 dollars since 1975. In 1960, the Ministry of Transportation and Communication's share of the provincial budget was 30 percent, in the 1980's only 6-7 percent. Consider these facts: from 1963-1983 the population of Ontario grew by approximately 34 percent to 8,000,000 persons; from 1963-1983 the municipal road system has increased in length by more than 14,500 kilometres not including widenings or multi-lane expansions; from 1973 to 1982, the number of motor vehicles in Ontario increased by 70 percent or 2,507,000 (note that trucks and buses have nearly doubled in quantity over the period); 90 percent of all personal travel is by road; the value of all commercial shipments by road in 1982 was greater than all other modes of transportation combined (rail, water and air).

4) The surface of thousands of kilometres of roads constructed in the expanding financial times of the 1960's have, or will soon reach the end of their useful life. Unless resurfacing occurs at the most optimal time of their life, they will rapidly deteriorate to a point where major and more costly measures are necessary; a reminder that it is estimated that the cost of resurfacing one kilometre of two lane road is $115,000, while reconstruction costs $690,000.

5) Necessary items, such as the maintenance of traffic signals, which have been eligible for subsidy by the Ministry for the past ten years, have not been cost-shared. These items continue to be funded by 100 percent local funding. For many large municipalities this can result in expenditures in the millions of dollars for which no subsidy is available.

6) It is agreed that the job creation impact of road expenditures is second only to that of housing expenditures; road works have a multiplier of 160 percent in triggering other job creating expenditures within the economy.

7) Road systems are vital in providing adequate fire protection, police protection, ambulance and hospital services ... indeed, all social services and the strength of the economy are dependent on the proper maintenance of Ontario's road system.

While raising some legitimate concerns about the roads funding, the Ontario Good Roads Association concluded that a $300 million per year shortfall in municipal road expenditures needed to be rectified over the next five years to maintain our present road system to acceptable levels. The Ontario Good Roads Association recognized that the provincial government would have great difficulty in meeting a commitment of this magnitude given the financial constraints which they face along with municipalities. As a result, the Ontario Goods Roads Association with the support of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario recommended to the provincial government that a reasonable interim alternative would be to meet 50 percent of annual needs by increasing the municipal allotment for roads by $75 million subsidy dollars in each of the next five years to partially meet the requirements of the participating municipalities".

TRIP Canada: Paved Municipal Roads in Ontario: The Condition and the Need (September 1984)

Similar findings were generated by the TRIP Canada study released in September 1984, entitled, "Paved Municipal Roads in Ontario: The Condition and the Need". Forecasts derived from a survey of all Ontario municipalities (68 percent response rate) indicated that some 61 percent or 37,679 kilometres of Ontario's paved municipal road system either needs or will need resurfacing or reconstruction over the next five years. The total expenditures required to prevent serious deterioration of our current system is $3.4 billion over this same period. Using 1983 actual expenditures as a base, the average annual spending level must increase by two and one half times (from $270 million to $683 million) in each of the next five years. TRIP reports that establishing a $683 million annual program for maintenance of existing municipal paved roads would generate $341 million through wages in the economy and create approximately 23,000 jobs each year for the next five years in construction and related industries.

Both studies stress the importance of roads in Ontario and note that the replacement value of the road system in the province, based on

1983 average costs excluding the value of land and the free rights-of-way given to utilities, is about $23 billion with the municipal component estimated at $17 billion. The provincial-municipal partnership, which has worked over the past fifty years to develop a roads system which is the finest in North America, must work together to maintain the system and reduce deterioration through neglect.

AMO REPORT ON SEWER AND WATER SERVICES (MARCH 1985)

In November 1984, the Ministry of the Environment introduced changes to the grants program for sewer and water services for small urban and rural municipalities. Up to that time the Ministry was offering direct grants of fifteen percent for major water and sewer works, and up-front grants scaled to a maximum of seventy-five percent for smaller municipalities. For many smaller municipalities, even seventy-five percent provincial assistance was insufficient to make water and sewer projects economically viable.

The Ministry has made the following changes effective April 1, 1985:

- o provincial assistance for the construction of sewer and water systems in communities of fewer than 1000 people will be increased to a maximum of eighty-five percent
- o provincial financial assistance for the construction of water and sewer systems in communities within regional governments will be expanded to a maximum of sixty percent, conditional upon the regional government assuming twenty-five percent of the cost of the project
- o provincial assistance for the extension of water lines in rural areas will be provided for the first time at twenty-five percent of the cost.

The Association stresses that, while it is encouraged by the changes introduced by the Ministry, unless the total dollars available are increased project construction will decrease offsetting many of the benefits to be gained by the Minister's initiative.

The work of the AMO Committee on Sewer and Water Sevices focused extensively on financial issues - namely, the massive accumulated operating deficits produced by Ministry-operated sewer and water plants.

Accumulated operating deficits have reached a level of $22,133,881 and have increased total capital obligations by over twenty-eight per-

cent for sewer and water services in small urban and rural municipalities.

At this time, AMO is recommending that the provincial government consider relieving municipalities of a minimum of 25% of the accumulated operating debt for sewer and water, the amount of the "write off" to be dependent on municipal fiscal capacity and Ontaro Municipal Board guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the summary of findings presented above, it is clear that the costs of raising the most seriously deteriorated infrastructure works to acceptable levels is high. While it must be acknowledged that the major responsibility for financing municipal infrastructure rests with local governments and local users, the funding required is beyond the ability of many local governments to assume. As a result, financial assistance must be sought from the provincial and federal governments, especially for projects having provincial or regional benefits and implications.

AMO is on record as opposing the federal government's withdrawal from the Community Services Contribution Program (CSCP). As has been noted, if cost-sharing similar to previous capital programs could be attained (50 percent federal, 25 percent provincial, 25 percent municipal), the municipal funding requirement over a ten-year recovery period would increase by about two percent of total municipal budgets. Without such funding, costs will increase about 25 percent for public works budgets, or add 6.75 percent to total municipal budgets over ten years. Therefore, AMO reaffirms the recommendation contained in the Report from the Association's Sewer and Water Services Committee and requests:

1. **That the provincial government continue to seek additional federal funding for municipal infrastructure improvements and that it request the new federal government to restore the Community Services Contribution Program or establish a similar program which provided badly needed assistance to municipalities throughout Ontario**

AMO has endorsed the brief prepared by the Ontario Good Roads Association. Recognition of the $300 million dollars per year shortfall in municipal road expenditures over the next five years requires that the provincial government increase allocations to municipalities through grants offered through the Ministry of Transportation and

Communications. Due to the financial constraints of our time, AMO must encourage the Ontario government to do more with less resources available.

2. **AMO supports the recommendation of the Ontario Good Roads Association which states the following: "... that the allotment for roads (increase) by 75 million subsidy dollars in each of the next five years to partially meet the requirements of the participating municipalities".**

While seeking additional funding for municipal roads, the Association must stress the urgency of providing additional funding for the entire range of municipal infrastructure systems, and must strive to ensure that any additional funding allocated to road systems not come at the expense of other necessary services.

In the area of sewer and water service to small urban and rural municipalities, AMO stresses:

3. **That while encouraged by the changes recently introduced by the Ministry of the Environment, unless the level of funding is increased, project construction will decrease thereby offsetting many of the benefits to be gained by the policy initiative.**

The Association recognizes the need to examine alternative local government sources of funding, including new methods of financing major capital works to offset the revenue shortfall relative to municipal infrastructure. Therefore, AMO recommends:

4. **That, in conjunction with the above recommendations, discussions concentrate on examining alternative and additional local government funding sources.**

Additional local government funding sources, including new methods of financing major capital works, must be found to help reduce the revenue shortfall relative to municipal infrastructure. In addition to user fees and funding from other government sources, the FCM study noted a series of methods implemented in the United States and Europe to finance infrastructure. While many are not adaptable to Canadian circumstances, they do demonstrate the availability of other revenue sources for consideration. Among those funding sources identified include private sector leasing schemes; public/private partnerships; infrastructure development banks; infrastructure bonds; and municipal enterprises operated for profit (profits to offset infrastructure costs). Discussion could perhaps identify other possible sources of funding which are more suitable for Canadian municipalities.

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